

The tireless work of Rep. Barney Frank and the Poker Players Alliance finally made some progress Wednesday as HR 2267, the Internet Gambling Regulation, Consumer Protection, and Enforcement Act, passed the House Financial Services Committee by a vote of 41-22. The result can be viewed as a small but important victory for the poker community, on a battle that has been fought over and over again on Capitol Hill over the past few years.

The bill, which could ultimately lead to the legality and regulation of online poker in the States, will now be sent to the House of Representatives for more amendments and a majority vote. Should the bill get the majority vote from the House of Representatives, it would then be passed along to the Senate for another majority vote, before being signed into law by the President.

Wednesday's win was just the first of many in order to regulate online poker in the United States, but the PPA was very encouraged by the result.

"The fact is, online poker is not going away," said Alfonse D'Amato, chairman of the PPA. "Congress has a choice — it can license and regulate it to provide government oversight and consumer protections, or our lawmakers can stick their heads in the sand, ignore it, and leave consumers to play on non-U.S. regulated websites in all 50 states. I'm glad the Financial Services Committee today overwhelmingly chose to act and protect Americans as well as preserve the fundamental freedoms of adults and the Internet."

The committee spent hours Wednesday amending HR 2267 and several modifications were made to the bill. They include mandatory implementation of technologies to protect against underage gambling; high standards to prevent fraud, abuse and cheating, to ensure fair games for customers; requirements for operators to set daily, weekly or monthly limits on deposits and losses to monitor and detect individuals with excessive gaming habits; and requirements to ensure that bettors are restricted from using credit cards to gamble on the Internet.

"We commend the lawmakers who helped make H.R. 2267 stronger through a variety of consumer protection mandates," said John Pappas, PPA executive director. "In particular, we thank Representatives **John Campbell**, Mary Jo Kilroy, and Melissa Bean for their thoughtful additions to the bill and their interest in preserving the rights of adult poker players in their districts."

One area of concern lies within the first amendment discussed on Wednesday, which restricts sites that have intentionally broken Internet gaming laws from getting a license to conduct business in the United States. This will likely affect larger online poker sites such as PokerStars, Full Tilt Poker and the old Ultimate Bet, all of which allowed players from the U.S. to play on their site following the passage of the UIGEA. The amendment, which was introduced by Congressman Brad Sherman, passed by a voice vote.

In a press release following the hearing, the PPA made the following statement regarding the amendment: "There is still much work to be done and areas of policy in this bill that must still be addressed. To be clear, despite the concerns of some of our members, nothing in the Committee-passed legislation precludes lawful Internet poker-only operators whom U.S. players know and trust today from the opportunity to operate under a regulated system. The PPA will work with House and Senate lawmakers to ensure that the final legislation produces the best regulated online gaming environment for the consumer."